

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

HA-05 ACDA-12 MCE-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 A-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4243

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 13197

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (MONDALE, WALTER F), TH US

SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO THAILAND

1. WE BELIEVE THAT THE BASIC US OBJECTIVES OF THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT WERE FULFILLED AND THAT THE THAI CONSIDER THAT THE VISIT SATISFIED THEIR ESSENTIAL INTERESTS. THE REAFFIRMATION OF US INTEREST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL THEMES OF THE VISIT, ADMIRABLE SATISFIED BOTH THAI AND US OBJECTIVES.

2. OVERALL, IT HAS BEEN CLEAR THAT US WITHDRAWAL FROM INCOCHINA, FOLLOWED BY A SHARP REDUCTION IN US PRESENCE AND PROGRAMS IN THAILAND LEFT IN ITS WAKE GRAVE AND LINGERING DOUBTS AMONG THE THAI LEADERSHIP ABOUT US CONSTANCY TOWARD THAILAND AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, OFFICIAL USG PRONOUNCEMENTS TO THE CONTRARY NOTWITHSTANDING. THE VICE PRESIDENT'S ASSURANCES THAT THE US ATTACHES PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO US-THAI RELATIONS, HIS REAFFIRMATION
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OF US INTENTIONS TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC AND HIS REITERATION THAT THE US WILL HONOR ITS COMMITMENT UNDER THE MANILA PACT WERE WELCOME MUSIC TO THE THAI. WE BELIEVE THAT THESE STATEMENTS, COMING FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT, HAVE GONE FAR TO REMOVE SUSPICIONS THAT EARLIER STATEMENTS ABOUT OUR COMMITMENTS AND INTENTIONS IN THE AREA WERE MORE WINDOW DRESSING THAN SUB-

STANCE. THIS CLEARLY WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE OF THE VISIT HERE, AND ONE WHICH WAS, IN OUR PRELIMINARY JUDGMENT, LARGELY ACHIEVED. THE ANNOUNCED APPROVAL OF THE SALE OF ANOTHER SQUADRON OF F-5E AIRCRAFT LENDS CREDENCE TO THE MORE GENERAL STATEMENTS REGARDING US COMMITMENTS UNDER THE MANILA PACT. THE VICE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT TO PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK THAT THE US WILL BE A RELIABLE SUPPLIER OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT NEEDED BY THE THAI WILL ALSO GO FAR TO REASSURE THE RTG.

3. THE REFUGEE QUESTION WAS THE MOST TROUBLESOME BILATERAL ISSUE TO BE DISCUSSED. WE BELIEVE THAT HERE, TOO, THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT PROVED VERY REASSURING TO THE THAI. THEY ARE CONFIDENT NOW THAT THE MATTER IS SYMPATHETICALLY UNDERSTOOD AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE USG. THE VICE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS IN THIS REGARD SHOULD SERVE TO ATTENUATE AT LEAST TEMPORARILY SOME OF THE INTERNAL PRESSURES ON PM KRIANGSAK TO TAKE A HARDER LINE ON REFUGEES.

4. THE PRESIDENT'S INVITATION TO PM KRIANGSAK TO VISIT THE US WAS WELCOME NEWS AND SHOULD STRENGTHEN KRIANGSAK'S HAND SOMEWHAT IN THE THAI POLITICAL CONTEXT. THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT, ALONG WITH THE PRESIDENT'S INVITATION, CONSTITUTE, IN KRIANGSAK'S EYES, USG ENDORSEMENT OF HIS FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY INITIATIVES.

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5. THE ONLY SOMEWHAT SOUR NOTE FOLLOWING A VICE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT WHICH WAS IN EVERY WAY A RESOUNDING SUCCESS HAS BEEN THE CONTINUING PUBLICITY BEING GIVEN TO WHAT APPEARED AT THE TIME TO BE A MINOR MISUNDERSTANDING OVER THE ELECTRONIC FRISKING OF JOURNALISTS ATTENDING THE VICE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE. SOME THAI JOURNALISTS ALLEGED THAT THIS WAS AN INSULT AND REFUSED TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE BUT THE ISSUE APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN HARMONIOUSLY RESOLVED. UNHAPPILY, SINCE THE VICE PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE, THE THAI PRESS HAS CONTINUED TO HARP ON THIS EPISODE AS WELL AS ON WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THEM DURING THE VISIT TO THE REFUGEE CENTER WHERE US REPORTERS WHO WERE ORGANIZED INTO A PRESS POOL WERE SEEN ACCOMPANYING THE VICE PRESIDENT WHILE SOME THAI REPORTERS WHO WERE NOT IN THE THAI POOL WERE EXCLUDED. IN OUR VIEW THE SHRILL CRITICISMS OF THE THAI PRESS ARE EXAGGERATED AND UNJUSTIFIED. WE BELIEVE THAT THEY STEM FUNDAMENTALLY FROM A SENSE THAT THE VERY LARGE SECRET SERVICE PRESENCE IN THE VICE PRESIDENT'S PARTY WAS OVERLY CONSPICUOUS AND THIS IN SOME WAY IMPLIED A THAI INABILITY TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SECURITY.

6. IN COMMENTING ON FOREGOING, WE DO NOT WISH
TO GIVE IT EXAGGERATED SIGNIFICANCE. AS INDICATED ABOVE,
FROM A BROADER PERSPECTIVE THE VISIT WAS A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL
ONE THAT ACHIEVED THE BASIC OBJECTIVES FOR WHICH IT WAS
DESIGNED.
WHITEHOUSE

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